

The Way to True Happiness



Ajahn Dtun

The Way to True Happiness

Translated from talks given in Thai by

VENERABLE AJAHN DTUN (THIRACITTO)



The Way to True Happiness

By Ajahn Dtun

Copyright 2013 by Venerable Ajahn Dtun Thiracitto

This book is a free gift of Dhamma and may not be offered for sale. All commercial rights are reserved. Permission to reprint in whole or in part for free distribution as a gift of Dhamma, however, is thereby granted, and no further permission need be obtained.

Inquiries may be addressed to:

Wat Boonyawad

Baan Kong Yai

Ampher Bo Thong

Chonburi 20270

Thailand

Telephone: +6687-999-6154

First Printing August 2013

2,000 copies

This book has been sponsored for free distribution by lay supporters of Wat Buddha Dhamma. Additional support was received by the Mendis family, in memory of their father, Dr. Mervyn Mendis (also known as N M P) who passed away on 21 Dec 2011.

Publisher Q Print Management Co., Ltd.

Tel: 662-2800-2922

Preface

This book contains a number of talks given mostly to lay people by the Venerable Ajahn Dtun. The first talk, *The Power of Virtue, Concentration, and Wisdom*, was given in 2011 at the Bandar Utama Buddhist Society in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At the time it was appreciated by many listeners for being a good overview of the Buddha's path of practice as well as describing clearly the stages of attainment on the Noble Path to Liberation. The talk has been reworked from the original oral translation so as to give greater accuracy of meaning while also filling in the small omissions that naturally occur during live translations.

Then there are four shorter pre-meal reflections. These types of reflections are frequently given by the Venerable Ajahn to the laity who come to make offerings of food and requisites at the monastery. The reader will notice a difference in tone or style within these short and pithy reflections. They emphasize fundamental points of Dhamma without going into great details. Each reflection does, however, serve to reassert the correct path of practice.

As with all talks given by the meditation masters within the Thai Forest Tradition, they are very much ad lib in their style. The emphasis is always to speak from the heart and touch upon points of Dhamma that are felt to be relevant to the listener. This can be seen in the final talk, *The Ten Spiritual Perfections*, as it gently encourages its listeners to always persevere in their spiritual practices so that they may achieve their goals.

It is therefore sincerely hoped that the reader will gain the same benefit as the listeners did, by receiving the inspiration to either start, or keep on with, the practice of spiritual development.

For any errors that may still remain in both text and translation, the translator accepts full responsibility and humbly begs the reader's forgiveness.

The translator
Wat Boonyawad
August 2556 (2013)

Contents

The Power of Virtue, Concentration and Wisdom	1
Kamma: A Keystone within the Buddha's Teachings	31
A Debt That Exceeds the Heavens and the Earth	39
Our Search for True Happiness.....	45
Cleaning the Heart.....	55
The Ten Spiritual Perfections	59
A Short Biography of Venerable Ajahn Dtun ..	79

The Venerable Ajahn Chah would frequently say: "There is not much at all to the practice of Dhamma. There is only the contemplation and investigation of this body." That is, we must see that the body is impermanent and absent of self. He would go on to say: "In addition, you must also contemplate the mind—its sensory impressions, and its moods and emotions" meaning we must see the impermanence and selflessness of the mind and all of its moods and emotions that we are always attaching to. The practice is, therefore, all about contemplating the body and contemplating the mind—that's all. Simply these two things.

The Power of Virtue, Concentration and Wisdom



29 May 2554 (2011)
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Delusion, or an unawareness of the true nature of things, has been dominating our minds for an incalculable number of lifetimes. The Lord Buddha compassionately taught all sentient beings by pointing out to them the path to be practiced for the realization of true happiness. If he had never been born, we would never know the path that transcends all discontent and suffering, thus achieving true happiness. All Buddhas, whether past or future, attain full enlightenment here in the human realm. Never has there been a Buddha who attained to full enlightenment in a hell realm or

as an animal, a ghost, a demon (asura), a celestial being, or as a Brahma¹ god. Therefore, we can consider the human realm to be truly the most excellent of all realms. Once having taken human birth we all have the ability to cultivate the mind so as to make it pure like that of the Lord Buddha and his arahant (fully enlightened) disciples.

Since time-without-beginning ignorance has gained mastery over the mind by making it subject to the kilesas (mental defilements) of greed, anger and delusion. What then must we do to stop the mind from being enslaved to the defilements, or to its thoughts and emotions? When the kilesas of greed and anger, or satisfaction and dissatisfaction, are controlling the mind, or sexual lust is prevailing within the mind, we will consequently think, speak and act in ways that are directly influenced by these defiling emotions. The mind is so tremendously versatile that it is constantly changing to conform with whatever the defilements dictate. This can only happen, however, if we are lacking *sati-paññā* (mindfulness and wisdom), which serves to protect and care for the mind. Without *sati-paññā*, the mind is unable to oppose the mental defilements

¹ Heavenly beings composed of purest light. Their existence is more subtle than that of devatas (celestial beings that experience pleasure through the five senses) due to the refinement of their minds' being able to access states of mental absorption (*jhāna*), thus they abide in the highest heavens.

in any way whatsoever.

In this present life our hearts² are affected by suffering and agitation. People go about harming and killing one another owing to the influence of greed and anger. And with delusion manipulating the mind we are even capable of harming our parents, arahants, or the Lord Buddha himself. Such actions will certainly cause the mind to fall into a hellish state after death. Within our minds we are capable of taking on the ways of hungry ghosts, angry demons and even animals. When we behave immorally it is due to the power of ignorance directing the mind. This behavior creates the potential for the mind to fall into a lower subhuman³ realm at the time of death. Whenever we realize that all forms of immoral behavior cause suffering not only for ourselves, but also for our families and society in general, we must then try to have patience and the self control to refrain from performing any such behavior.

Once mindfulness and wisdom begin to function they will bring about within our heart the faith and confidence that the Lord Buddha

² As with most Dhamma books that are translated from the Thai language, the word 'heart' is used interchangeably with the word 'mind'. The word in the Pāli language is citta. The citta is that which knows or that which feels.

³ Subhuman realm: alternatively called the apayabhumi, or the planes of misery. There are four realms, listed in their descending order: Demons (Asura), Ghosts (Peta), Common Animals and finally, Hell.

did truly attain full enlightenment by his own means; that his teaching is for the ending of all suffering, and that his arahant disciples were able to purify their minds by practicing the Buddha's teaching (Dhamma) and the monastic discipline (Vinaya) laid down by him. This is called having the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha (Monastic Community) within our heart. We will also develop the confidence that the performing of good deeds brings good, favourable results, and that the performing of bad, immoral deeds brings only suffering. When we are conscious of the fact that we wish only for goodness and happiness then we must refrain from all actions that are bad or unwholesome, and only perform good, virtuous deeds as much as we possibly can. For a person to be recognized as truly 'good' they have to be observing the five moral precepts.⁴ Through the practicing of good deeds and generosity, together with the maintaining of correct moral behavior, we are able to transform our minds by acquiring the qualities that are truly becoming of a human being.

⁴ The five precepts are:

To refrain from destroying living creatures.

To refrain from taking that which is not given.

To refrain from sexual misconduct.

To refrain from incorrect speech.

To refrain from intoxicating drink and drugs which lead to carelessness.

When we are born we could, for the most part, be considered as incomplete and as not fully human because the mind does not yet have *sīla* (moral discipline) as an integral part of its make-up. If we desire to change this status and become good, decent human beings then it is necessary to maintain the five moral precepts. And should we ever wish to further transform the mind to be like that of a *devatā* (a celestial being), then it is necessary that we not only keep the moral precepts, but also develop a sense of moral conscience and a dread of the consequences of our bad actions. Furthermore, if we were to desire to further elevate the mind to resemble that of a Brahma god, then we must not only be cultivating goodness and moral virtue, but must also be developing the Brahma Vihāras, or the four sublime states, within our hearts.

These four qualities are: Firstly, we cultivate kind-heartedness or *mettā*, extending this feeling towards both other humans as well as all sentient beings.

Secondly, we develop compassion, or *karunā*. This quality is expressed as the wish to help other beings.

Thirdly, the quality of sympathetic joy, or *muditā*. This is the ability to take pleasure in the happiness and good fortune of others, having no feelings of jealousy or resentment at their joy and

success.

Fourthly, equanimity, or *upekkhā*. If we are unable to be of any real assistance to other beings that are experiencing suffering and hardship, then we must know how to let our hearts rest equanimously. Like-wise, if our own mind is distracted and restless, we too must endeavor to bring the mind to a stable, equanimous state. Anyone who cultivates these Brahma Vihāras of kind-heartedness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity will be nurturing coolness and peacefulness within their hearts.

However, should one wish to develop the mind in a way that will bring the ultimate shift from being an unenlightened person to becoming a noble attained being (*ariya-puggala*), regardless of whether it be at the first stage of stream entry (*sotāpanna*), the second stage of once-returning (*sakadāgāmī*), the third stage of non-returning (*anāgāmī*), or the fourth and final stage of arahantship (a fully enlightened being), then actually this is not so difficult to do at all.

For lay people it is possible to attain to either of the first two lower levels of spiritual attainment, namely, the first stage of stream entry and the second stage of once-returning. This is possible because the minimum *sīla* that must be observed at both of these levels is only the five precepts. Once having

attained to the first level one will have no doubts whatsoever as to the authenticity of the Buddha's enlightenment, or as to whether practicing his teaching truly leads to the transcendence of all suffering. Also, no doubts will be held as to whether the Lord Buddha's arahant disciples were able to purify their minds through the practicing of his teaching and monastic discipline. In other words, the heart possesses complete faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. It also possesses total confidence in the existence, and working of kamma⁵ : that the performing of good deeds yields good, beneficial results, and performing bad or immoral deeds only brings more suffering. You will also be strengthening the pāramī (spiritual perfection) of sacca (truthfulness) together with the pāramī of sīla, through the honoring of your intention to never deliberately break any of the five precepts. Your faculties of mindfulness and wisdom will have also clearly realized the harm of performing unskillful bodily actions. Hence, you will naturally abstain from:

- taking the life of other living creatures;
- taking what has not been given;

⁵ Kamma: One's intentional actions of body, speech, and mind which have a moral content of either good, bad, or neutral. All actions produce results that directly correspond to the moral content that set the process in motion. It is a universal, impersonal, moral law.

- all actions that are deceptive, or insincere, that would mistreat the heart of another person with whom one has a sexual interest, or already shares sexual relations;
- taking any type of intoxicating drink or drug.

By maintaining these four particular precepts you are thus subduing your bodily actions. The subduing of verbal actions is brought about by refraining from false speech that is in any way harmful to others. Consequently, all of your bodily and verbal actions are within the scope of the five precepts.

For novice monks, their *sīla pāramī*, or moral discipline, is further enhanced by the keeping of ten precepts which entails that they live a life of complete celibacy. The *sīla pāramī* of fully ordained monks is strengthened even further owing to the fact that they not only lead a life of absolute celibacy, but also have to adhere to 227 precepts, or training rules. These rules provide a moral foundation that will aid in the controlling and calming of all their bodily and verbal actions.

If we aspire to develop the mind so that we become a Noble One, a person who has attained to one of the four levels of enlightenment, we must then develop *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—moral virtue,

concentration and wisdom—for this is the path of practice that will abandon all the greed, anger and suffering that exists within our hearts. Once having been abandoned, the heart will naturally experience a sense of ease and lightness. The power of *sīla* alone is incapable of destroying the mental defilements of greed, anger and delusion that dwell within our hearts. It can only suppress the defilements by not allowing them to exceed the bounds of correct moral behavior. It is, therefore, necessary for us to mobilize all the forces of the ‘Dhamma Army’, namely moral virtue, concentration and wisdom so as to rid the heart of the forces of greed, anger and delusion which collectively form the ‘Kilesa Army’. Individually, the strength of *sīla* is not sufficient because it only acts to subdue our bodily and verbal actions. The mind, however, still remains in an unpeaceful condition. Thus, when we advance the army of *sīla* into the heart, we must also send in the army of concentration so as to take control of the mind. Concentration is developed by bringing mindfulness to focus upon a meditation object (such as the breath or the word *Buddho*) until the mind becomes peaceful and concentrated. Once having achieved a degree of concentration, its peaceful energy will give rise to a new power—the collective force of *sati-paññā*, mindfulness and wisdom. The hearts of all beings are held in

subjection by greed, anger and delusion, that is, the armies of the kilesas. In order to drive these armies out from the heart it is necessary that we send in the joint forces of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

When we frequently practice meditation in either of the formal postures of sitting or walking, we are trying to train ourselves in developing the skill of making the mind peaceful. Once we are capable of doing so, we will be able to maintain mindfulness throughout the day. This will enable us to keep control of the mind, watching over it regardless of whether we are standing, walking, sitting, lying down or doing some other activity. The constant application of effort into developing mindfulness and concentration will also aid in giving rise to the faculty of *sati-paññā*, the combined working of mindfulness and wisdom. With stronger powers of mindfulness, we are able to keep a watch over all the thoughts, moods and emotions that move through the mind. Initially, the mental defilements that can be most readily perceived are the gross forms of greed and anger, or satisfaction and dissatisfaction, towards forms, sounds, odours, flavours, and physical contacts. If mindfulness is focused upon what we normally believe to be the mind⁶ we will

⁶ Here the Venerable Ajahn is referring to the awareness we normally have of our thoughts, moods and emotions. In truth they are merely contents of the mind but not the mind itself.

be aware of everything that arises within it, whether it be a thought or emotion of greed or anger, all will be known. When we cultivate this path to true liberation we are leading the Dhamma Army of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* into our hearts. *Sīla*, moral virtue, is comparable to the army's provisions; while *samādhi*, concentration, could be considered as the army's strength or fighting potential. *Paññā*, wisdom, when combined with mindfulness will function as the army's armaments. Together they will take up the fight with the *kilesas* that are residing within the heart. As a consequence, the control previously exerted by the *kilesas* of greed, anger, and delusion will be diminished.

Whenever greed arises within the mind we can now keep a tight rein on it, owing to our commitment to not break any of the moral precepts. If people do not live by a code of correct moral discipline it is well within their capability to compete ruthlessly with others in order to get what they want. Some will even go as far as harming or taking the life of other people just to obtain the objects of their desire. However, if a person observes correct moral principles, they would never take something that they knew to belong to someone else, no matter how much they may covet that particular object. The strength of mind achieved through the practice of concentration will

also be helping to restrain any emotions of greed by enabling us to patiently bear with the emotion and maintain our self control. Mindfulness and wisdom will take up the task of contemplating the emotion so as to abandon it from the heart. It will reflect upon the particular feeling, or situation at hand, thereby allowing us to be content with what we already have. We can then patiently go about acquiring the things that we need in honest ways.

The defiling emotions of anger and ill-will have had power within the heart for uncountable lifetimes. And just like with greed, when people get angry or have feelings of ill-will and vengefulness, they will argue or physically harm one another. For some they will even go as far as taking other people's lives. Nevertheless, once we position the forces of *sīla* within our heart then no matter how angry or displeased we may feel we will never physically harm or take the life of another person. Instead, we will have patience, endurance, and self-control owing to the strength of mind that we have attained through the development of concentration. Mindfulness and wisdom will then serve as a weapon to strike back at the anger by cultivating thoughts of friendliness, goodwill and forgiveness as a means to remove the anger from our heart. Wisdom will always be working, looking for skillful means that may be of use in eliminating,

or alleviating, any feelings of anger that exist within the heart.

The observance of moral precepts creates a strong foundation upon which we can establish our concentration practice. The strength of concentration in turn gives rise to *sati-paññā*, mindfulness and wisdom. We then use mindfulness to keep a watch on the mind, observing all of its thoughts and emotions. The emotions most easily noticed are the coarser defiling ones of pleasure and displeasure that we feel towards forms, sounds, odours, flavours and bodily sensations. When the eyes see forms, or the ears hear sounds, there will always be a consequent feeling of either pleasure or displeasure arising. However, once mindfulness is firmly established in the present moment, *sati-paññā* will be able to reflect upon and see the impermanence of any emotion that has arisen. The mind, as a consequence, lets the emotion go from the mind. By having mindfulness securely founded in the present moment we are able to keep the mind free from all emotions, therefore abiding in a state of detached equanimity. No matter how subtle or strong the pleasure or displeasure may be, our mindfulness and wisdom will be aware of the emotion, contemplating it in order to abandon it from the heart.

Once the mind has gained a firm basis in

concentration, it naturally follows that mindfulness becomes more sustained. As a result, we will have the wisdom to reflect upon all of the sensory impressions that contact the mind and their resultant emotions, seeing them in the very instant that they arise. Nevertheless, we are still not able to completely rid the mind of all its moods and emotions. This is because, even though we may have been successful in relinquishing all the emotions of desire and aversion that have arisen in this day, tomorrow, our eyes will meet with new forms, and we will experience sounds, odours and flavours again, the body will contact cold, heat, softness and hardness again. There will forever be feelings of pleasure and displeasure arising within the mind. As a result, our *sati-paññā* will always have to contemplate all of our daily sensory contacts as they arise.

Owing to the power of the mental defilements, the mind foolishly attaches to one's own body in the belief that it is one's 'self'. This will cause us to look upon the bodies of other people as being objects of beauty and attraction, and we will also view material objects as having ownership, that is, being owned by some 'self' entity, especially with regards to our own possessions. This state of ignorance will subsequently give rise to further greed, anger and delusion within our minds. If we

wish to counter this habitual flow of the mind and turn back the tide of the defilements, it is necessary that we develop the practice of body contemplation, especially the contemplation or analysis of our own body. We cultivate this practice with the intention of seeing the body's impermanent nature, and that it is completely without any entity that could be called a 'self' or one's self.

The strength of our moral virtue and concentration helps mindfulness and wisdom to be firmly maintained in the present moment. Mindfulness and wisdom will then set about investigating all emotions that arise so as to see their transient nature and selflessness. Mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom work together in contemplating the emotions that have arisen, regardless of how many there may be. Whether they be feelings of desire, aversion, pleasure or displeasure, they will each be reflected upon with the aim of gradually letting go of all attachment and clinging within the mind.

Whenever the mind is free of thoughts and emotions, and with mindfulness and concentration securely established in the present moment, we should then take up the contemplation of our own body. The purpose behind this contemplation is to seek out the truth as to whether the body and the mind are one and the same or not. The complete

path of practice—*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*—moral conduct, concentration and wisdom—will now begin to come together within the heart. Mindfulness and wisdom investigate one's own body by contemplating upon either of several themes:

- contemplation of the thirty-two parts of the body; that is, the simple constituent parts that form a human body;
- contemplation of the *asubha* (unattractive) nature of the body;
- contemplation of four primary elements that make up a human body—earth, water, air, and fire.

The contemplations are practiced with the aim of seeing the body's impermanence and the non-existence of any entity that could be called a 'self' or 'oneself'. As a result, the mind gradually begins to let go of its attachment to the body.

The transcendent paths to liberation (*ariya-magga*) can only become a reality once the forces of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* have united into a single unified force, which has increasing degrees of intensity depending upon the stage of the path that is being developed. The first of these noble, or transcendent, paths is the path to stream entry (*sotāpatti-magga*), which ends with the initial

breakthrough to enlightenment. At this stage of path development frequent contemplation of the body is necessary, so as to see its impermanence and absence of self. When this is clearly witnessed, even if only once, the heart will feel sadly disappointed due to this sobering realization. This feeling will, however, transform into joy (pīti) as the mind temporarily releases its hold on the body. All doubts as to the way of practice will subsequently fall away. One will now know with confidence that when sīla, moral discipline, is firmly upheld it creates the supportive conditions needed for establishing concentration. Once mindfulness and concentration have been developed to the degree that their calm, focused awareness can be sustained even outside of formal meditation practice, they will in turn serve as a basis for mindfulness and wisdom to go about their work of contemplating all the emotions of greed and anger, or pleasure and displeasure, with the aim of letting them go from the mind. Mindfulness and wisdom will also be put to the use of contemplating one's own body with the intention to clearly see the body's impermanence and absence of self. The body must be contemplated over and over again until the mind can clearly see that the body is not the mind and the mind is not the body. This penetrating insight will cause the mind to irreversibly let go of the first of

three portions⁷ of attachment towards the physical body, because the mind mistakenly identifies with the body as being oneself.

Having perceived clearly with wisdom that the body is impermanent and devoid of self, the mind will naturally give up the coarsest portion of attachment that is dependent upon the body. Consequently, the defilement of greed is weakened and the strongest properties of anger, that of ill-will and vengefulness, are completely abandoned—never to arise again. The mind will nevermore be fearful of illness, or unnerved when faced with death, because it has gained insight into the truth by seeing the breaking apart of the body before it actually breaks up; that is to say, one thoroughly understands the reality of death before death actually comes. Whoever cultivates the mind until achieving insight to this degree, where the coarsest portion of attachment to the body has been cut

⁷ When describing the letting go of the mental defilements, the Venerable Ajahn generally speaks as if a pie-chart had been divided into four equal portions. The successive attainments of enlightenment, or path fruitions, each abandon one portion of the defilements. The first three portions are dependent upon the mind's deluded attachment to the physical body as being oneself. The fourth and final portion is dependent solely upon the subtle delusion, or attachment, that the mind has towards the stream of mental events (feelings, memory, thinking, and consciousness) as being products of one's 'self'.

off, is commonly called a sotāpanna⁸, or a stream enterer.

If, however, one is not content with this level of attainment, and wishes to further cultivate the mind to a higher degree of purity, then one must continue practicing the path of sīla, samādhi and paññā—virtue, concentration and wisdom. The next stage of path development is called sakadāgāmī-magga⁹, the path of practice that leads to the attainment of once-returning.

What then are the objects of contemplation for a sotāpanna who is walking the noble path at this level? With the forces of sīla, samādhi and paññā being positioned within their heart they will engage the forces of greed, anger, and delusion in combat upon the battlefield of the heart. The battle is waged by continuing with the contemplation of both the body and the mind. Within their mind there are defilements still remaining, although these are more subtle than before the attainment of sotāpanna. Greed, or desire, has diminished on account of their having contentment for the things

⁸ Sotāpanna: One who has entered the stream of Dhamma that flows inexorably to Nibbana—final deliverance. A Sotāpanna will be reborn at most only seven more times (and only into the human or higher realms) before attaining final liberation—Nibbana.

⁹ Sakadāgāmī: a once returner; one who has realized the second of the four stages of enlightenment and will attain final deliverance after returning only once more to the human world.

that they already have. Ill-will and vengefulness have been completely removed from the heart leaving the defilement of anger to be experienced in the form of displeasure. Their mindfulness and wisdom is, however, able to contemplate any feelings of displeasure and easily let them go. The feelings of pleasure or displeasure with forms, sounds, odours, flavours and bodily sensations have weakened in strength owing to the ease with which mindfulness and wisdom are able to see that whatever arises must, by nature, cease—they are all impermanent and absent of self. When cultivating the path to once-returning, the practice of body contemplation must become more detailed. The body must be frequently investigated with an aim to see its impermanent and selfless nature. The means used to accomplish this are either using the asubha reflections on the unattractiveness of the body, or by contemplating the four primary elements that constitute the physical body. The contemplation must be performed again and again, probing deeper than in the previous stage, until the truth behind the body is seen with greater clarity. As a result the mind will let go of the second of the three portions of attachment towards the body. The deluded perception as to the true nature of the body is further diminished. Greed and displeasure will, as such, be further reduced in force. The mind

has now made the transition from sotāpanna to sakadāgāmī—the once returner.

What must the practitioner now do if they wish to further reduce the defilements still remaining within their heart? When growing rice the farmers sow the seeds in a paddy-field. Once the seeds form shoots, they pull them up and then replant the seedlings throughout all their fields. And when the time is right they will harvest their crop. The following year the farmer must plough the fields in preparation for the sowing of seeds, sow the seeds, pull up the shoots and replant the seedlings....The farmer is always working the same land. Similarly, the noble path leading to the attainment of non-returning (anāgāmī-magga¹⁰) is also cultivated by contemplating the body just as before. The contemplation now aims to remove the last remaining subtle portion of attachment to the body. Any practitioner who wishes to make the transition from sakadāgāmī to anāgāmī must, however, strengthen their sīla by increasing the number of precepts that they permanently observe

¹⁰ Anāgāmī: the ‘non-returner’, one who has realized the third of the four stages of enlightenment. They have severed the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth within physical or sensual realms. After death they will be reborn in one of the higher Brahma worlds called the pure abodes. Here they will ultimately attain to full enlightenment and enter Nibbana, thus never again to return to the human plane.

from five precepts to eight precepts¹¹. For novices and monks they will continue to maintain their ten and 227 precepts respectively. The path factors of moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom have been progressively intensifying along the way. At this third stage of path development, anāgāmī-magga, the practitioner's moral conduct is unwaveringly constant. And on account of the weakening of the mental defilements, their concentration has deepened and become even more subtle. Consequently, their mindfulness and wisdom are growing sharper, and are being used to focus upon the mind by observing the arising and falling of all of their mental impressions, emotions and thoughts. Subsequently, the emotions of greed and anger, or pleasure and displeasure, towards forms, sounds, odours, tastes and bodily contacts will be lessened. Mindfulness and wisdom will constantly see that all of one's thoughts and emotions are merely fleeting phenomena and completely devoid of any self entity. The mind will, accordingly, remain objective and equanimous towards everything that

¹¹ The sixth precept is to refrain from eating at the wrong time i.e. the period between noon until the following dawn. The seventh precept refrains from entertainment, beautification and adornment. The eighth precept refrains from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place. In observing the eight precepts there is, however one significant revision of the five precepts. It comes in the third precept which changes from refraining from sexual misconduct to refraining from any kind of intentional sexual behavior.

arises within it.

Further, whenever the mind is free from thoughts and emotions, the combined strength of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* will take to investigating one's own body. The method of contemplation used may be either reflecting upon the unattractiveness of the body, or analyzing the four elements of, earth, water, air and fire. The investigation must probe very deeply, so much so that when contemplating upon the unattractiveness of the body, one's mindfulness and wisdom will penetrate right through the meditation object and enter into the emptiness of the mind. Likewise, when contemplating the four elements, mindfulness and wisdom must analyze the elements to their subtlest degree which will cause the mind to temporarily let go of the body and thereby enter into emptiness. As long as there is subtle attachment to the body still remaining, the mind must continue to use its faculties of mindfulness and wisdom to repeatedly contemplate the essential nature of the body. In due course mindfulness and wisdom will see the impermanence of the body of the past; the body of the present that will transform into the body of the future will also be seen to be impermanent and totally devoid of anything that could be called a 'self'. Whenever this truth becomes clearly manifest the mind will completely let go of the last of the remaining subtle

attachment to the body; that is, it finally surrenders the third and final portion of its attachment for the body. As a consequence, all greed, anger and sexual desire finally, and permanently, die out.

The mind is at last free of all attachment and clinging, not only for one's own body, but also the bodies of others and all material objects. It is attached to absolutely nothing in the world; moving peacefully along the golden mean—never again to be swayed by attraction or aversion. The mind, as such, will perceive the world as being completely empty. Even if the total land surface of the Earth were to turn entirely into gold or diamond, the mind wouldn't perceive them as being any different from sand or stone. Everything will be seen as being just elements that comply with the laws of nature; whether it be human, animal or material, all share the one same nature of being formed from earth, water, air and fire. Upon realizing this, the mind will begin to partially access its own true natural state of being an element¹² that accords to its own entirely distinct nature. The greater the extent to

¹² This is a reference to Dhamma-element or Nibbana-element, or alternatively, the purity of mind that becomes partially manifest when the mind totally relinquishes all attachment to the world of materiality. Only then can the mind begin to access the Dhamma-element which is an immaterial element having its own unique nature from that of the material world. It is a state of non-arising and non-ceasing—it is the Deathless. The Dhamma-element is fully accessed upon the attainment of Arahantship—full enlightenment.

which greed, anger, and delusion have been reduced within one's heart, the greater is the corresponding true happiness that will arise accordingly.

The mind of an anāgāmi (non-returner) has given up all attachment to the physical body. And as a result, it has also let go of its identification with the past and the future. Yet in spite of this, the mind is still attached to the present because the mind mistakenly takes the present moment knowing of sensory impressions to be the actual mind itself. The united force of their moral conduct, concentration and wisdom has succeeded in irreversibly driving the defilements of greed, anger, and sexual lust from their heart. But, the king of the mental defilements is still concealing himself deep within the mind. He is none other than delusion of an extremely subtle nature. If an anāgāmi's mindfulness and wisdom are not refined enough they will never stand a chance of rooting out delusion so subtle as this. Their practice, therefore, is to continue cultivating the noble path of moral virtue, concentration and wisdom, making these factors even stronger than in the previous stages. Moral discipline is by now an integral part of their character, whereas concentration needs to be developed to deeper levels so as to bring about subtler faculties of mindfulness and wisdom. The path at this stage is called arahatta-magga—the

path that leads to the attainment of Arahantship, or full enlightenment. If an anāgāmī fails to bring the spiritual practice to a completion before their death, their mind is certain not to take rebirth in the realms of hell, or in the animal world, the ghost world, the realm of demons, or even into the human realm. The possibility also no longer exists for their mind to be born into any of the celestial realms or even in the lower levels of the Brahma worlds. Their mind can only take rebirth into one of the higher Brahma worlds called the Suddhāvāsa realms, or the pure-abodes, and it is here that they will ultimately attain to Arahantship.

For the anāgāmī who aspires to completely uproot the remaining mental defilements within their heart, in other words, remove all traces of delusion, it will require that they possess highly-developed faculties of mindfulness and wisdom in order to thoroughly analyze the various workings of the mind. At this stage of the practice body contemplation is no longer of any purpose because the mind has given up the final portion of attachment for the body. The focus of an anāgāmī's practice is solely upon the domain of the mind. Mindfulness and wisdom must therefore turn to examining the delicate workings of the mind, namely:

Vedanā—the feelings of the mind.

Mindfulness and wisdom must probe to see that even the very subtle happiness that permeates the mind is only a condition that arises, and thus naturally ceases;

Saññā—memory. The act of recognition, association and interpretation of one’s personal perceptions is mistakenly held to be the mind. Once mindfulness and wisdom have developed in precision they will see that saññā is just a mode of the mind that arises and ceases;

Sankhāra—thinking and imagination. The mind foolishly holds to all of its mental formations, believing them to be the mind. The thoughts of an anāgāmī are, for the best part, truly wholesome with only a slight few that could even be considered as mildly unwholesome. The incisiveness of their mindfulness and wisdom will see that all mental formations—without exception—are impermanent phenomena that arise and cease;

Viññāna—sensory consciousness or knowing. Owing to the corrupting influence of delusion, the mind identifies with consciousness—or as many prefer to call it, the ‘knower’—as being the mind itself. Mindfulness and wisdom will notice that the ‘knower’ is merely a function of the mind that is impermanent and totally devoid of any entity that could be called one’s ‘self’.

All of these mental functions are simply

modes of the mind. They are not, however, the actual mind itself.

It is therefore the work of mindfulness and wisdom to repeatedly contemplate vedanā (mental feeling), saññā (memory), sankhāra (thinking and imagination) and viññāna (consciousness) to see that in truth they are all merely activities of the mind that arise and subsequently cease. Once mindfulness and wisdom finally overcome all doubts as to the true nature of these four mental khandhas¹³ they will by nature of their sheer subtleness discern that one's own mind is actually home to, and governed by, avijjā¹⁴—the king of all defilements. The delusive powers of avijjā trick the mind into taking avijjā as being the 'knower'. Avijjā has therefore been able to succeed in assuming the role of the 'knower'.

It is with reference to this particular matter that a number of enlightened meditation masters have variously made statements, such as:

¹³ Khandhas - The physical and mental components of personality: 1) the physical body, 2) feelings, 3) memory, 4) thinking and imagination 5) consciousness. They are often called the 'aggregates of attachment' because the mind attaches to them, identifying with them as being one's self. They are in fact simply natural phenomena that continually arise and cease and are devoid of any abiding entity that could be called one's 'self'.

¹⁴ Avijjā - Fundamental ignorance, or delusion, as to the true nature of oneself. This ignorance is also the essential factor binding living beings to the cycle of rebirth. It is the seed of being and birth, the very nucleus of all existence. It is also the root from which all other mental defilements (kilesas) arise.

- “If there is a point or center of the knower anywhere, that is the nucleus of existence.”
- “Look to see what lies behind the ‘knower’.”
- “That which thinks is not the mind; rather, it is that which does not think—that is the mind.”
- “The truth is still and has no voice; things that speak¹⁵ are not the truth.”
- “Do not attach to the past, nor to the future; let go of the past, let go of the future, let go of even the present.”

The anāgāmī must, therefore, use their finely-honed faculties of mindfulness and wisdom to destroy the mind that is governed by avijjā—fundamental ignorance. In truth, avijjā is simply a condition of the mind, that’s all it is. In acting to destroy the avijjā-controlled mind, mindfulness and wisdom are actually liberating the mind by separating it from the five khandhas. Once mindfulness and wisdom finally realize with absolute clarity that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, the mind will naturally let go of everything. The great meditation masters have each called this state the ‘Dhamma-element’ or

¹⁵ Refers to sankhāras, one’s thoughts or ‘inner voice’.

the state of pure knowing, for it arose within their hearts upon the complete extinction of all greed, anger and delusion. The Lord Buddha himself said: “There is no happiness greater than peace”, with Nibbana—Ultimate Peace or Liberation—being the highest goal of his teaching.

And so today I have talked on the practicing of Dhamma from its beginning to its very end. You may not fully understand everything that I have been saying, or you may well be completely in the dark as to what it is you have been listening to. Nevertheless, I offer you this teaching solely as a guide for your practice so that you will know the path that must be developed in order to realize Nibbana—Absolute Liberation. Therefore please take what you have heard and reflect upon it, putting it into practice to whatever extent your wisdom and ability will allow you to.

May I end this talk here.



Kamma: A Keystone within the Buddha's Teachings



5th February 2549 (2006)

In Buddhism, we have the Lord Buddha as our ideal. He was a man who purified his mind from all traces of greed, anger and delusion. Once having extinguished the dukkha (suffering,discontent) within his heart, he graciously extended his boundless compassion towards all sentient beings. Within his teachings he often pointed to the reality of the numerous realms of existence into which beings can be born, for example: the hell realms, animal realms, ghost and demon realms, the human realm, celestial and Brahma realms, and ultimately to a distinct spiritual dimension that some call the Dhamma-element, or Nibbana.

The Buddha taught us to have confidence in the reality of beings continually taking birth, or rebirth, into these various realms of existence. The cause for the continual transmigration of beings within this unrelenting cycle of birth, death and rebirth is that their minds are still defiled or, more precisely, are still subject to the control of ignorance. This being so, they will continue to wander on endlessly within this cycle, experiencing birth, death and rebirth in the various realms of existence both high and low, or gross and subtle. This cycle, called samsara, is beginningless with no known end due to the minds of beings deviating from the principles taught by the Buddha. As a result they are bound to this cycle, being completely unable to go beyond its power.

The Buddha therefore taught us to trust in the law of kamma. This law is truly a keystone within his teachings. He stressed that when a person performs wholesome actions they will reap favourable results, and when they perform unwholesome actions they will reap unfavourable results. This teaching in particular is an absolutely fundamental principle that must be held to within our hearts. If a religion teaches people to believe that their actions certainly do yield results then people will have the intelligence to be confident of the fact that when they perform immoral actions it

will result in their unhappiness, both here and now, and also in the future. Likewise, they will be certain that when they perform good, virtuous deeds it will result in their happiness, both here in the present and also in the future. Any intelligent person would therefore refrain from all unwholesome and immoral actions. However, to do so one must first see the harm and suffering that comes from immoral behavior by recognizing that it will only be a cause for one to experience immediate unhappiness and pain and that such actions will also be a cause for other people, and society in general, to suffer.

When we have the awareness and wisdom to see the harm, or the dukkha, that naturally follows any unwholesome action, our mind will feel repulsed at the thought of doing anything that would be against any of the moral precepts. Instead, we will see the benefits of maintaining the precepts, recognizing that they help to initially alleviate any unhappiness or discontentment within our heart by moderating all of our actions of body and speech. By not behaving or speaking in ways that are against the precepts, our heart will begin to experience a measure of coolness and peace. Hence any perceptive person will realize that when they take care of the moral precepts, the moral precepts will in turn take care of their heart by allowing it to experience a degree of coolness and tranquility.

Nevertheless, if we maintain a wise and careful watch on the mind we will notice that a feeling of discontentment is still present within the mind. This feeling comes about owing to the mind being deluded and identifying with the emotions of greed and anger, or pleasure and displeasure, that arise. Whenever we become aware of the presence of discontentment or unhappiness within our heart we must try to find any possible means that we can to bring it to an end. The Lord Buddha has shown us the way of practice that brings about the complete cessation of all dukkha. He taught that we must have moral virtue as a foundation for our spiritual practice. This then serves as a base upon which we establish our practice of concentration. Concentration, in turn, serves as the basis for the development of mindfulness and wisdom. With these two faculties of mindfulness and wisdom we are able to let go of the attachment and identification that we have towards the body and mind. They also help to lessen any unhappiness and discontent by working to cleanse the heart, removing all traces of dukkha until none remain.

Even when we have established moral virtue as a basis for our lives, our hearts will, nevertheless, still be open to experiencing moods of unhappiness and discontent. Therefore, we must attempt to keep control over the mind by carefully constraining it,

so as to keep it free from such emotions. To do this successfully it is necessary for us to calm our minds through the practice of concentration. Doing so creates the primary cause for the development of mental strength—the power of mindfulness. With mindfulness firmly established, the mind can sustain its awareness in the present moment and be aware of the arising of dukkha and its causes. Whenever dukkha arises, mindfulness will seek out ways and means to bring it to an end. Similarly, whenever any unwholesome thoughts arise we will possess the mindfulness and wisdom to know what needs to be done to counter the feelings or thoughts that are being coloured by greed and anger, or pleasure and displeasure. If greed arises it is to be countered by practicing renunciation and generosity. Anger and dissatisfaction are countered by forgiving and being warm-hearted towards one another. And if feelings of pleasure or attraction arise towards forms, sounds, odours, flavours and physical contacts, they are to be countered by using our mindfulness and wisdom to contemplate these feelings and see their impermanence and absence of self. Every feeling, mood, or thought that comes into being must also by nature, cease.

The development of meditative concentration depends upon a firm base of *sīla*, or moral virtue. It is the combined strength of concentration and

moral virtue that will subsequently give rise to the faculties of mindfulness and wisdom. These two faculties will enable us to relieve the dukkha within our hearts by working to clear away any defilements that arise. If we fail to develop concentration our mindfulness will never be able to keep up with all of the mind's thoughts and emotions.

The moods and emotions that issue from the mental defilements of greed, anger and delusion are great in strength and their very presence acts to cover up and weigh on the mind. Just as a flood destroys the things that it sweeps away, so too our hearts are swept along like logs in a wild flood. Our hearts are constantly being deceived by the flow of thoughts, moods and emotions that arise causing the heart to cling to, or identify with this flow as being the actual mind itself. The outcome is that feelings of discontentment and unhappiness are forever arising within the heart.

All of us must therefore try to practice in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha, and have confidence in the results of kamma. This means we trust that when we perform good deeds we will meet with favourable results, and when we perform bad deeds we must meet with unfavourable results. The Buddha instructed us to gradually develop our minds by performing good deeds, practicing generosity and building up the spiritual

perfections¹⁶. In addition we must also observe the moral precepts, develop concentration and cultivate wisdom. If we practice in this way our hearts will grow toward peace and true happiness. This is the path to true happiness, to Nibbāna, whereby all dukkha is brought to an end through the complete cessation of all greed, anger and delusion.

And so each and every day we must try to have our faculties of mindfulness and wisdom keeping careful control over the mind so that we only think, speak and act in good, wholesome ways. As a result our hearts will naturally develop in a way that will lead us beyond all unhappiness and discontentment and thereby arrive at true happiness.



¹⁶ Ten spiritual perfections (pāramī) cultivated as a support for realizing enlightenment: 1) generosity; 2) morality; 3) renunciation; 4) wisdom; 5) effort; 6) patient endurance; 7) truthfulness—being true to one's word; 8) resolution; 9) loving kindness; 10) equanimity.

A Debt That Exceeds the Heavens and the Earth



Mothers Day 12th August 2012 (2555)

All of you who have come here today are by nature inclined to seek out merit and goodness in your lives. Whenever you have free time from your work and daily duties you think of coming to make offerings to the monks, thereby creating merit and cultivating goodness within your hearts. People who are able to see the benefit of offering dāna (giving, or practicing generosity), as you are inclined to do, are relatively few in number, with those who can appreciate the benefit of practicing correct moral behavior being even fewer. Similarly, the number of people who can see the purpose of cultivating their minds by developing the meditative calmness of concentration are also not very many. Not to

mention how much fewer still are those people who possess the wisdom to let go of greed, anger and suffering, thereby weakening their influence within the heart.

When we have a wish to experience true happiness, we must subsequently try to refrain from all forms of unwholesome and immoral behavior, because such behavior will only create suffering for us, both here in the present and also in the future. Instead, we should only perform good deeds because in doing so we create the causes for happiness to arise within our hearts. The way that leads to true happiness, to the transcendence of all suffering, has been clearly pointed out to us by the Lord Buddha. He taught his disciples, both monastic and lay, to cultivate wholesome, skillful actions in abundance through the perfecting of the spiritual path of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, moral virtue, concentration and wisdom.

We should never live our lives in a careless and thoughtless manner because it is actually extremely difficult to obtain a human birth. All the more difficult still is it to be born human and to meet with the teachings of the Buddha. A human lifetime is relatively short in duration; what then are we going to do so that our lives will be of real consequence and meaning?

Once born there is nobody who can go beyond

sickness; nobody who can go beyond ageing; and nobody who can go beyond the deterioration and ultimate death of the body. And once we are dead there is nothing of material substance that can be taken along with us. All of our wealth and all of our possessions—absolutely everything—must be left behind here in the world. Even our bodies will be burnt to ashes or buried only to break down and return to their original elemental state of earth, water, air and fire.

Our birth was dependent upon the bodily elements that we have received from our parents. We must, therefore, try to conduct and develop ourselves so that we can be regarded as good sons or daughters. What must we do to make our parents feel happy and at ease? We must always try to refrain from behavior that would upset, or be hurtful to their feelings; never doing anything that would be a cause for them to feel distressed or unhappy. If we endeavor to behave and develop ourselves in wholesome ways that would have us regarded as good people, then our family lives will accordingly be peaceful and happy too. A father should always perform his family responsibilities to the best of his ability. Similarly, a mother should also go about her duties and responsibilities to the best of her ability. Children must also try to do what is expected of them by their parents, doing it

as best as they can. If we all try to develop ourselves to be good, decent people then our family lives will be happy, and our societies will be peaceful as well.

All of us have been able to take birth owing to the physical elements that we have acquired from our parents. We should, therefore, frequently recollect the debt of gratitude that we have to them, rather than just remembering it on only one day of the year. Our debt to our parents is of such great extent that it truly exceeds the heavens and the earth. If we were to attempt to repay them with gifts of money and material objects we could not completely do so. The only way to fully repay them is by giving the gift of Dhamma; that is, by pointing out to them the path of practice that leads to heavenly rebirth and ultimately to Nibbāna—true happiness where all suffering has been transcended.

We should, therefore, all make the effort to conduct ourselves in a manner that is befitting of good sons and daughters. We can do this if we develop ourselves in accordance with the teachings of the Lord Buddha. He taught us to always perform good deeds and to practice generosity as much as we possibly can, as well as to observe the moral precepts and develop concentration so that we can cultivate wisdom within our hearts. If we develop

ourselves in this way we will create the causes for mindfulness, wisdom and right view to arise within our hearts. With mindfulness and wisdom we will see that the true nature of the body is that once born, it must go through a natural process of change whereby it eventually degenerates until finally dying.

Accordingly, we have to try to live our lives heedfully by performing our work, duties and responsibilities as best we can. The work of cultivating the mind must also be performed to the best of one's ability. In doing so we will be developing the mindfulness and wisdom to be fully aware of the mental defilements, along with all of our thoughts and emotions, in the instant that they arise. By keeping a vigilant watch on the mind we will see whenever happiness or unhappiness arises. Every time that unhappiness or discontentment arises we must seek out its causes and look for a way to either let it go or cause it to cease. As a result, the mind will become cool and peaceful. Mindfulness and wisdom must therefore be developed so that we can continually filter the emotions of greed and anger, or in other words—suffering, out from our hearts.

Let us then make our minds cool and peaceful by practicing generosity and goodness; make them cool and peaceful by observing moral precepts;

make them cool and peaceful by developing the meditative calm of concentration; and let us make our minds cool and peaceful through having the wisdom to let go of all the attachment and clinging that we have towards our bodies, together with the attachment and identification with all the thoughts, moods and emotions that arise within our minds. If we practice in this way, our hearts will grow to be cool, calm and peaceful, and true happiness will naturally arise.



Our Search for True Happiness



13th August 2555 (2012)

Once we are born, within the heart of each and every person there exists a wish for happiness; there is no one who wishes for unhappiness. In our quest for true happiness most people believe that it can be obtained from material objects, or that it is to be achieved by seeking out wealth, honor and praise. This being so, we then try to achieve happiness through external means only, foolishly enjoying ourselves in a constant search for happiness via the senses. Consequently, we only think to seek out pleasure from sights, sounds, odours, tastes, bodily contacts and material objects, in the belief that all of these things will bring happiness to our hearts.

However, even if we have just a little awareness and discernment we will be able to see that all of these forms of happiness are very short lived indeed. In fact, happiness of such a kind only serves to temporarily relieve any unhappiness or dukkha (discontentment, suffering) within our hearts. And so our search for happiness purely through external means is not the way to achieve true happiness. Any person possessing even a slight measure of mindfulness and discernment will therefore see that no matter how much they search for happiness externally they will never achieve any genuine happiness.

If we were to never experience any dukkha within our hearts then it would not be necessary for us to go about the practice of developing and refining our minds. Yet in truth, our minds are possessed of ignorance. This causes the mind to attach to, and identify with, the physical body as being oneself. In addition, the mind will also be inclined, out of ignorance, to attach to the thoughts and emotions that pass through it in the belief that they are the actual mind itself. However, absolutely everything that the mind attaches to will prove to be an unending source of unhappiness and discontentment for our hearts, because there is nothing that can be attached to that does not cause the heart to experience dukkha.

When we hold to the belief that the body is oneself the mind will, accordingly, suffer every time the body is afflicted by sickness. And as the body experiences the gradual changes brought about by ageing, this too will serve as a source of suffering for the heart. Furthermore, when the body finally moves into its dying phase, or it is actually about to meet with death, this too will be a cause of suffering for our hearts.

Similarly, when we hold to our thoughts, moods, and emotions in the belief that they are the actual mind, then whenever any emotions of greed or anger have control over the mind we will consequently speak and act in ways that will create more unhappiness and suffering within our lives. This is all due to the mistaken belief that the moods and thoughts that we experience are the actual mind itself; that is, believing the mind is the mood or the mood is the mind. We do not possess enough mindfulness and wisdom to be able to separate the mind out from its moods and thoughts. This lack of mindfulness and wisdom also makes us unable to see that our bodies are impermanent: once born our bodies must, by nature, eventually die.

In the course of our lives we study a variety of arts, crafts and academic subjects, all of which are external to us. We study them merely to sustain ourselves and experience some temporary

happiness in our lives. However, it is a very small number of people, to say the least, who actually think to study or investigate into the true nature of their own body and mind. One must start with studying one's own body so as to verify whether or not the body belongs to some 'self' entity that could be called 'I', 'me' or 'you'.

With some awareness and discernment, we will be able to reflect and see that whenever the bodily elements of earth, water, air and fire go out of balance, sickness and discomfort will follow. The mind tends to believe that the body is oneself. Yet when the body is sick, is the mind able to order the body to get better or not? And as the body changes and moves toward old age, is the mind able to command the body to be young once again or not? Despite the fact that we take great care of our bodies, by nourishing them three or four times a day with good food, as well as buying nice clothing for them to wear, we are still not able to command the body to be as we would like it to be. Finally, when the body is deteriorating and about to die, is the mind able to demand of the body that it live longer? There is absolutely no one who is able to command the body to be as they would wish it to be because the true nature of the body is that once born it must subsequently experience sickness, ageing and death. Therefore, our faculties

of mindfulness and wisdom need to become wise to the true nature of the body by investigating the body so as to realize that it is comprised only of the elements of earth, water, air and fire. These elements merely bind together temporarily and nothing more than that. Having come into existence the body must naturally go through a process of gradual change, ultimately deteriorating to the point that it loses its vitality and dies. Mindfulness and wisdom must therefore be put to the work of continually contemplating the body with the aim of seeing its impermanence and complete absence of any self entity, recognizing that the body is not the mind and the mind is not the body. The mind is merely a short-term tenant that has come to reside and make use of the body for the duration of the body's lifetime. In less than one hundred years the body will deteriorate and die. This is its nature.

And so it is necessary that we reflect upon the true nature of the body, with mindfulness and wisdom, so that we are not heedless in how we live our lives, for we have been fortunate to receive this opportunity of taking a human birth and meeting with the teachings of the Buddha. We should never fail to seek out and develop our own inner spiritual wealth. Accordingly, we must aim to perform generous and virtuous deeds to the utmost of our capability, together with building up the spiritual

perfections (pāramī)¹⁷ of moral virtue (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). As a consequence, we will generate the joint faculty of mindfulness and wisdom together with the right view¹⁸ to be able to see clearly that impermanence is the body's true nature: it is born, deteriorates and dies. With right view we will also recognize that the body is not the mind and the mind is not the body, the two are distinct and separate entities.

Our wisdom faculty needs to become aware of the fact that we take birth on account of our kamma¹⁹, we are the owners of our kamma and inherit its results, our future is born from our kamma and companion to our kamma, we live supported by our kamma. Whoever performs good kamma will receive favourable results. Whoever performs bad kamma will receive unfavourable results. If we reflect upon this we will certainly not be heedless in how we live our lives. Instead, we will make every effort to do only what is good and virtuous together with continually building up the spiritual perfections to the greatest extent that we can.

¹⁷ Traditionally the scriptures only refer to ten pāramīs. However, some Thai meditation masters refer to the development of concentration as being a pāramī on account of the essential role that it plays in the arising of wisdom. For details of the traditional ten pāramīs, see Footnote 16, p.37.

¹⁸ The insightful understanding that sees things as they really are.

¹⁹ For a definition, see Footnote 5, p.7.

If we live our lives in such a way, our faculties of mindfulness and wisdom will naturally develop. These two faculties, when supported by the mental strength acquired through concentration practice, will be able to see all the moods, thoughts and emotions that arise within the mind regardless of whatever kind they are—greed, anger, pleasure or displeasure. Normally, the mind will attach to, or identify with, these thoughts and emotions in the mistaken belief that they are the mind itself. This only serves to cause suffering, agitation and pain within our hearts. However, by developing moral virtue, concentration and wisdom we will develop the power of mindfulness and wisdom. This will then enable us to see that all of our thoughts and emotions are merely conditions or states of mind that naturally arise and cease.

Our minds have previously been unaware of the true nature of our thoughts and emotions. This results in our identifying with the emotions of greed and anger as being ourselves. Consequently, feelings of happiness and unhappiness or pleasure and displeasure will always be arising within our hearts. However, once mindfulness and concentration have become well established we will then acquire the mindfulness and wisdom to see and comprehend the condition of dukkha, its cause, and the path of practice that must be taken

in order to gradually bring dukkha to its end.

When we lack mindfulness and wisdom we will also lack the ability to be able to keep a continual watch over our minds and take care of them. We will, therefore, always be experiencing dukkha within our hearts. However, if we were to possess mindfulness and wisdom, not only would we be able to keep a constant watch over our minds and take good care of them, we would also be able to filter out all our bad thoughts together with any moods of greed, anger and discontent, thereby eroding the strength of the emotions. However, despite this our minds will sometimes entertain bad thoughts, but if we have mindfulness and concentration together with patience and self-control, we will be able to rely upon our wisdom faculty to assist us in giving up these thoughts. As a consequence, the mind will become cool and peaceful every time that it is free from thoughts and emotions. However, when we are lacking in mindfulness and wisdom, our minds will be deluded and will go along with all of our bad and unskillful thoughts. The outcome of this is that we will speak or act in bad and unskillful ways that will create immediate unhappiness and suffering for us and will have negative effects that continue on into the future.

The faculties of mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are therefore extremely important,

because they function to protect and care for the mind, thereby gradually easing the mind's unhappiness and pain. With mindfulness and wisdom we are able to develop and control our minds so that we only think, speak and act in virtuous and skillful ways. In doing so, we will create the conditions for our hearts to experience happiness and well-being both here in the present and in the future.



Cleaning the Heart



8th October 2555 (2012)

Our homes are not very nice places to live in if they are dirty and untidy. Our minds, actually, are no different to our homes. If our minds are full of greed, anger and delusion, or in other words dukkha (suffering, discontentment), then they are also not nice places to be in because within them there will be only feelings of discontent and restlessness to be found. To make an untidy home nice and cosy requires that it be straightened up and made clean and tidy. Our minds too must also be cleaned, because when we do so we are relieving them from greed, anger and delusion. As a consequence, coolness and peacefulness of mind will arise.

The Lord Buddha taught us to cleanse our hearts through practicing good deeds and generosity, maintaining moral precepts, developing

the meditative calm of concentration and cultivating wisdom. This course of practice creates the conditions that help to develop, cleanse and ultimately purify our hearts.

Within the hearts of all beings there exists a wish for happiness; there is no one who wishes for unhappiness. This being so, whenever unhappiness arises within our hearts we must subsequently try to find out what has caused it, and then look for ways and means to let it go or bring it to an end. We must certainly never harbor such feelings within our hearts. If we have mindfulness watching over and taking care of our minds, we will be able to see whenever any emotions of happiness and unhappiness arise. Whenever we feel unhappy or discontent we must remain mindful of this and patiently endure by maintaining our self-control. We must then seek out any skillful means that we can to aid us in reflecting upon this dukkha so that it can be abandoned in the very instant that it arises.

If, however, our faculties of mindfulness and wisdom are too weak to effectively contemplate and remove any dukkha or defiling emotions from our hearts, then it is necessary that we turn to establishing mindfulness upon our chosen meditation object so as to concentrate our minds. This works to cut off any bad thoughts or emotions

that are currently within the mind. For instance, if we bring our awareness to focus upon the meditation word ‘buddho’ and continually repeat it, buddho, buddho... for three to five minutes then our minds will become quiet, cool and peaceful. Alternatively, we can focus upon our breathing coming in and going out for three to five minutes as a means to make our minds cool and peaceful. All thoughts and emotions, once having come into being, must by their nature also cease.

The result of practicing concentration is that we are able to firmly establish our minds in the present moment. Whenever the mind is focused in the present moment, it will be free from all thoughts and emotions. It is at this time that our faculties of mindfulness and wisdom can move in to take control over our minds so that we will only think, speak, and act in good, wholesome ways. Mindfulness and wisdom must always be working to filter out all that is bad from within the mind, hence freeing the mind of all defiling thoughts and emotions. As a consequence our hearts will become cool, calm and peaceful.

The faculties of mindfulness and wisdom are, therefore, crucial if we are to protect and take care of our hearts. Our wish to never feel unhappy or discontented means that we must put every effort into letting go of these feelings whenever they

arise. Similarly, our wish to be happy will require that we make every effort to develop our minds by following the teachings of the Buddha. He taught us to practice good deeds and generosity to the utmost of our ability, together with the cultivation of moral virtue (sīla), concentration (samādhi) and wisdom (paññā). This, he taught, is the way to gradually cleanse and purify the heart. With mindfulness and wisdom constantly guarding and caring for our hearts we are able to not get caught by the snares which Māra²⁰ lays to keep us entrapped.



²⁰ Māra is the demonic personification of the defilements of greed, anger and delusion, and by extension, the personification of the insidious hold which the senses have on the mind. Māra is a force antagonistic to enlightenment or the development of moral virtue, concentration and wisdom. Māra works to prevent beings from gaining insight into the true nature of the sensual realm thus confining beings to the realm of samsara, leaving them unable to find the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

The Ten Spiritual Perfections



31st December 2555 (2012)

Today is the 31st of December 2555. It is generally considered to be the last day of the year, or more commonly called New Year's Eve. On this particular day a great many people think only about wanting to have a good time and this they try to achieve by seeking happiness from sensory pleasures and material objects. Furthermore, many people will go out to a variety of places of entertainment because it is regarded by most people in the world that they will experience happiness and enjoyment there.

Everyone who has gathered here this evening, whether monastic or lay, share a common aspiration to transcend dukkha (suffering, discontent) and to

experience true happiness in our lives. By coming here for the evening chanting and meditation period, we are all cultivating the meritorious actions of observing the moral precepts, practicing meditation and finally listening to a Dhamma²¹ talk. In choosing to be here, one is also building up the pāramīs²² (spiritual perfections) within one's heart rather than letting one's time pass by in vain. It is important that we always keep trying to strengthen the ten spiritual perfections because when we do so we are cultivating the path of practice that all the Buddhas and their arahant (fully enlightened being) disciples followed. They slowly built up and matured all ten spiritual perfections.

It is interesting to look at how the Buddhas and their arahant disciples developed the dāna (generosity) pāramī. In every human lifetime their kind nature would incline them to want to make merit by practicing generosity. Whenever they had the means and resources they would naturally want to share their wealth depending upon the strength of their eagerness to give, as well as the suitability of the time and the occasion.

In every lifetime they would also endeavor to strengthen their sīla (moral virtue) pāramī.

²¹ Supreme truth: the right natural order underlying everything; the teaching of the Buddha.

²² For details, see Footnote 16, p.37.

We too should do the same. When we have enough awareness and wisdom to see the harm in transgressing any of the moral precepts we will naturally see the benefit of maintaining each of the five precepts²³. For those who see the benefit of observing the eight precepts²⁴, the ten precepts of novice monks, or the 227 precepts of fully ordained monks, then they will do so respectively. One's ability to keep a greater number of precepts will of course depend upon the strength of one's resolve to do so.

To cultivate the nekkhama (renunciation) pāramī requires that we remove ourselves from our homes, our families and society. In doing so, we put aside all of our work and responsibilities to give more time to developing our Dhamma practice. One may choose to seek out suitable places for practice that are located in either forests, mountains or caves, while some people (just like yourselves) choose to practice in monasteries. One's choice of place is always made with the aim to devote more time to observing moral precepts and cultivating one's mind through the practice of meditation. In coming here to practice meditation we are also practicing letting go of the attachment

²³ See Footnote 11, p.22.

²⁴ See Footnote 4, p.4.

that we have towards other people, our homes, our wealth and everything in general. One actually gets to know how it feels to remove oneself from all of these things. This pāramī must be strengthened every time one takes a human birth.

The strengthening of the paññā (wisdom) pāramī depends upon the arising of the faculties of mindfulness and wisdom. These two faculties help us to see the benefit, or the virtue, of continually performing good deeds and practicing generosity to the utmost of our ability. It will also assist us to see the pain and the danger of remaining within samsara, the continuous cycle of birth, death and rebirth. If we can see this clearly we will then be able to see and clearly understand the nature of dukkha, both mental and physical, by seeing that regardless of however many times we take birth there is no one who can escape from sickness, ageing, and death. Once we have the wisdom to perceive the danger within samsara, then we must use our mindfulness and wisdom to try to find a way out of this cycle. The way out is to let go of our attachment towards absolutely everything. Only then will we free ourselves from all suffering and discontent.

When developing the khanti (patient endurance) pāramī we need to have the mental strength to be able to endure with the cold, heat, and

all other kinds of physical discomfort. The mental discomfort stirred up by our thoughts, moods and emotions must also be patiently endured. The development of the khanti pāramī therefore strengthens our hearts so that we can tolerate both bodily and mental discomforts.

To develop the viriya (effort) pāramī requires that we constantly put forth effort into removing the kilesas (mental defilements) of greed, anger, and delusion from our hearts. With patience and endurance we should energetically apply ourselves to the practice of sitting and walking meditation in order that we can free our minds from all mental impurities.

The sacca (truthfulness—being true to one’s word) pāramī must be gradually built up and made strong. Whenever we make promises or resolutions we must always attempt to honor them. In every lifetime it is important to practice in this way, never wavering or becoming discouraged. However, for someone who has yet to develop this particular perfection to a strong degree, when they make vows and promises they may not always be able to fulfill them or remain completely true to them. If such is the case, we must then re-establish our intention and try again. And if we fail again, then try again. . . As the saying goes: “If you fall down, pick yourself up and continue walking on.”

We must always keep working at the practice, training ourselves to be resolute and determined. And as a consequence, our sacca pāramī will grow in strength.

The adhitthāna (determination, resolution) pāramī is all about the establishing of goals and resolutions that we then determine to fulfill, for example: “May I transcend all dukkha and realize true liberation–Nibbana.” Some people may express their aspiration in terms of wishing to attain to a particular stage of enlightenment on the Noble Path to Liberation, for example: “May I always strive for the attainment of Stream Entry (sotāpanna–first stage on the Noble Path.) Once having set a goal or aspiration for oneself, we must then work to build upon all of the spiritual perfections so as to realize our goal. All the Buddhas practiced in this way by making a solemn resolution to become a future Buddha. Their arahant disciples also established determinations, such as to take the spiritual practice to its very end and thus attain arahantship–full enlightenment. Once having made a resolution they would work to create the causes and conditions that would enable them to perfect the pāramīs to the degree necessary to realize their goal. When making resolutions we should aim for the highest: to realize Nibbana–the complete extinction of all mental defilements within the heart thus bringing

dukkha to its final cessation. Even though at times we may feel that we are so far way from our goals and that they are extremely difficult to achieve, but nevertheless, we must still aspire for the highest. If by the end of this present life we have still not realized our goals, the perfections that we have accumulated will serve as a supportive conditioning to continue perfecting the pāramīs in our future lives. It takes many, many lifetimes to build up the spiritual perfections to the degree necessary to attain our goals. It is for this reason that one must always be developing the adhitthāna pāramī because it serves to give direction to one's spiritual practice.

Mettā (kind-heartedness) is also another pāramī that must be developed. It is a quality that we should always try to have present within our hearts. Feelings of mettā must be directed not only towards oneself, but also towards all fellow human beings and all sentient beings in general. When developed, mettā provides us with an antidote for any feelings of anger, ill-will and vengeance. We must try to cultivate this quality every day until we become skilled at doing so, thus making it habitual or a characteristic of ours. For anyone who continually cultivates mettā, wherever they go they will tend to travel safely and experience very few obstacles. And for anyone who can develop this

quality until it is boundless in its extent, their heart will naturally dwell in peace and coolness.

Whenever we are feeling unhappy or experience any kind of suffering or discontent, we must practice developing the upekkhā (equanimity) pāramī. This means that we have to develop the ability to make our hearts equanimous and objective towards all feelings of pleasure and displeasure that may arise in relation to sights, sounds, odours, tastes, and bodily sensations. Upekkhā is another spiritual perfection that must be developed until its presence is firm within the heart.

This then is a brief outline of the ten pāramīs that must be practiced and further enhanced in each lifetime that we take a human birth. All the Buddhas had to cultivate each of these ten pāramī to their absolute perfection, thereby creating the necessary conditions for their supreme attainment of self-enlightenment. All arahants had to build up all of the ten pāramīs in the course of their spiritual practice, ever since distant past lives until their very last life. And when all ten perfections were sufficiently developed they were able to realize Nibbana—absolute liberation. Therefore, we must take this present opportunity that we have to develop ourselves by carefully following in the footsteps of the Buddha and his arahant disciples. Every day we must give our care, attention and

energy to developing all that is virtuous, together with the ten spiritual perfections.

As we cultivate the spiritual perfections, they will gradually grow in strength to become more and more complete. With the frequent practicing of generosity our hearts will grow in strength and we will also be going against any ungenerous tendencies that we may have, until finally we are able to give with a heart that is free from all hesitancy.

Over time our commitment to observing correct moral behavior will also gradually grow stronger. Through our Dhamma practice we will be able to build up the patience and strength of mind that is necessary to prevent us from breaking any of the moral precepts.

To practice renunciation we must do so by having periods of time away from our homes so that we can give more time to cultivating and strengthening our minds through the practice of meditation. If we neglect to develop this particular pāramī by never thinking to come and stay here in the monastery or any other quiet and suitable place, then we will tend to become creatures of pleasure that are attached to their homes and all the comforts that they provide. Also, we will remain overly concerned about not only ourselves, but also our families and relations. It is our attachment

towards all of these things that makes it difficult for us to distance ourselves from them. If we develop this pāramī in each lifetime it will wholesomely condition our minds to be resolute and enable us to easily put down all of our worldly worries and concerns.

The remaining pāramīs of wisdom, patient-endurance, effort, truthfulness, resolution, kind-heartedness and equanimity must also be enhanced in each and every lifetime in order to make our hearts strong and resolute. All of the pāramīs that we practice and build up will eventually gather into one single force within the heart causing our hearts to be much stronger than those who have never given any attention to spiritual development. Therefore, the practicing of all that is good, meritorious and wholesome greatly strengthens our hearts.

If we have cultivated the strength of the sīla pāramī since previous lifetimes, we will not find it difficult in this present life to observe the five or eight moral precepts. And for some people they will have no difficulty at all in observing the ten precepts of a novice monk or the 227 precepts of a fully ordained monk. This is because they have developed the sīla pāramī to a strong degree in their previous lives hence finding it comparatively easy to be a monastic in this present life. There are other people, however, who meet with continuous

difficulties and obstructions when wanting to live the monastic life. This is due to the fact that they have not accumulated the *sīla pāramī* to a sufficient degree. In truth, there are a great many people who will never be able to live the monastic life in this lifetime. Therefore, if our commitment to practicing correct moral behavior keeps growing in strength over many lifetimes, our *sīla pāramī* will also grow stronger and we will observe the moral precepts with ever greater ease.

When we wish to develop concentration we will often have to do so in combination with the practice of renunciation by going off into the mountains, forests, caves or other places of seclusion so that we can devote ourselves to the practice of meditation. If in our previous lives we have given a lot of time and effort to the development of concentration, it will serve as a supportive conditioning that will carry through into this present life and we will find it easy to develop the meditative calm of concentration. However, anyone who in their past lives did not make the effort to build up the strength of concentration will find it difficult to develop concentration in this present life. If we are aware that our ability to concentrate the mind is weak then we must put a lot of effort into developing concentration in this present life. If over time we increase our effort in the practice

of meditation, the calmness and peacefulness of concentration will gradually arise. The practice of meditation works to strengthen the mind and also supports the development of mindfulness and patient endurance. One's wisdom faculty, often called mindfulness and wisdom, will also gradually grow in strength.

The path of practice that leads to Nibbana is to practice good deeds and generosity in abundance, together with cultivating *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—moral virtue, concentration and wisdom. The cultivation of all these path factors will give rise to *sati*-*paññā*—mindfulness and wisdom. It is the development of mindfulness and wisdom that enables us to deeply understand the Four Noble Truths; that is, to understand the nature of *dukkha*, its cause, its cessation and the path of practice that leads to the state of cessation. If we cultivate our hearts according to this path we will be gradually freeing them from all greed, anger and suffering. As a result, our hearts will be slowly cleansed until they are made pure. This way of practice transforms the mind from the state of being unenlightened to that of a Noble One—a being who has attained

to any of the four stages of enlightenment on the Noble Path to Liberation²⁵.

To attain to the first stage of enlightenment, that of stream entry, requires that mindfulness and wisdom be powerful enough to clearly see that the body is not the mind and the mind is not the body. This insight will transform the mind by weakening our attachment to the belief in the existence of a self. And as a consequence the emotions of greed and anger will also be weakened in force.

Actually, it is not too difficult at all to follow the Buddha's path of practice. To develop the strength of moral discipline one must always maintain the moral precepts that one has chosen to observe whether it be five, eight, ten or 227 precepts. Together with this we must also try to make time every day for practicing meditation. When we are able to maintain the mental calmness and equilibrium obtained from practicing meditation, our mindfulness and wisdom will consequently grow sharper. Whenever sights, sounds, odours, tastes, and bodily sensations are experienced our faculties of mindfulness and wisdom will easily abandon any emotions of greed and anger, or

²⁵ There are four stages of attainment on the Noble Path: 1) sotāpanna—the stream enterer or one who has entered the stream that flows inexorably to Nibbana; 2) sakadāgāmi—the once returner; 3) anāgāmi—the non-returner; 4) arahant—a fully enlightened being.

satisfaction and dissatisfaction that arise. The mind will constantly see the impermanence of all the arising thoughts, moods, and emotions and will therefore be easily made equanimous.

Once we have established a foundation of concentration within our hearts, our mindfulness and wisdom will be able to contemplate the body with greater clarity. When practicing body contemplation we place the greatest emphasis upon our own body. There are a number of ways or methods that we can use to contemplate the body, and they should be practiced frequently. For instance, one may choose to contemplate the “thirty-two parts,” these being the simple constituent parts that make up a human body, or one may choose to remain within the scope of the five principal objects of contemplation: hair, body hair, nails, teeth and skin. Each part should be reflected upon with the aim of seeing its intrinsic impermanence because all parts ultimately break apart and disintegrate. Alternatively, one may choose to contemplate any of the asubha reflections on the loathsomeness and unattractiveness of the body. Asubha contemplations are, once again, practiced so as to see the body’s impermanent nature as it goes through the stages of gradual disintegration with a special emphasis being placed on seeing the breaking apart of the body after death. Another

way to contemplate the body is to separate the body out into the four elements of earth, water, air and fire in order to see the body's impermanence and its complete absence of any abiding entity that could be called a "self" or "oneself." The result of frequent body contemplation is that the mind will begin to let go of its identification and attachment towards the body.

Body contemplation is not something that we stop doing after clearly seeing the true nature of the body just once. When the mind clearly sees the body it will re-enter into the peacefulness of concentration. And, once having let the mind rest peacefully in this state the mind will re-gather its strength again. This mental strength or energy will serve as a support for one's mindfulness and wisdom to continue contemplating the body again. The contemplation is always performed with the aim of seeing the impermanence of the body and its complete absence of self. Body contemplation must be made into a regular practice, doing so by taking the body apart—over and over again.

Whenever emotions arise, they must be contemplated immediately in an attempt to let them go. If mindfulness is firmly established in the present moment it will be aware of everything that arises within the mind. Whenever memories arise, our mindfulness and wisdom will seek out a

skillful means to stop the mind proliferating about the past. Similarly, mindfulness and wisdom will also be aware of the arising of any thoughts about the future and will contemplate the thoughts so as to make the mind free from them. When mindfulness and the mental equilibrium obtained from concentration can be constantly maintained throughout the day, we will have the wisdom to reflect upon the emotions of greed and anger or satisfaction and dissatisfaction that arise and thereby bring them to an end by letting them go. As a result, the mind will be kept free from thoughts and emotions.

Any time that the mind is free from thoughts and emotions, one should turn to investigating one's body because it is at this time that one's mindfulness and wisdom will be able to clearly see the object of its investigation. Let the mind separate the body out, piece by piece, in order to see the body's inherent impermanence; its nature is to ultimately break apart and disintegrate. With frequent investigation one's mindfulness and wisdom will begin to grow in experience, becoming more and more skilled in the task of contemplation.

Body contemplation can be practiced at any time. Whether the eyes are open or closed, we can still focus our awareness upon the body with the aim of seeing it break apart and disintegrate.

We need to contemplate the body frequently if we are to make the mind acknowledge the body's impermanence and absence of self. As soon as the mind begins to see this clearly it will begin to gradually let go of its attachment and identification towards the body. Our deluded perception as to the true nature of the body will now begin to weaken, and as a result, the defiling emotions of greed and anger will also weaken in force. The mind will now begin to realize the fruitions, or attainments, of the Noble Path—stage by stage—until achieving full enlightenment, or in other words, Nibbana—the state of true happiness and liberation.

The path of practice is to develop *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, moral virtue, concentration and wisdom. This is the way to gradually bring the mental defilements of greed, anger and delusion to their complete cessation and thus make our hearts pure. This way of practice will lead our hearts away from all suffering and discontentment, and thereby take us to Nibbana.

Our practice, therefore, is to cultivate goodness within our hearts in each and every lifetime. We do this by developing moral virtue, concentration and wisdom, as well as continually building up all ten of the spiritual perfections. Anyone wishing to go beyond suffering must strengthen the spiritual perfections within their heart. When developing

the pāramīs it is important to never allow the feeling of discouragement to enter into the heart. Also, we must always take advantage of this present opportunity to practice while our health is still strong. If we are ever to realize our desire for true happiness, or the transcendence of all dukkha, then we must always follow in the footsteps of the Buddha and all of his arahant disciples because the path walked by them leads to the remainderless extinction of all greed, anger and suffering within the heart.

Therefore, we must be patient and persevere with the practice of gradually developing the spiritual perfections without ever becoming disheartened. As laypeople, you must go about your work, duties and family responsibilities as best as you can. The work of cultivating the mind, however, is a duty that one has towards oneself. This task needs to be undertaken by patiently and persistently putting forth effort into developing sīla, samādhi, paññā so that we can gradually cleanse our hearts until making them pure. This is how we cause true happiness to arise within our hearts.

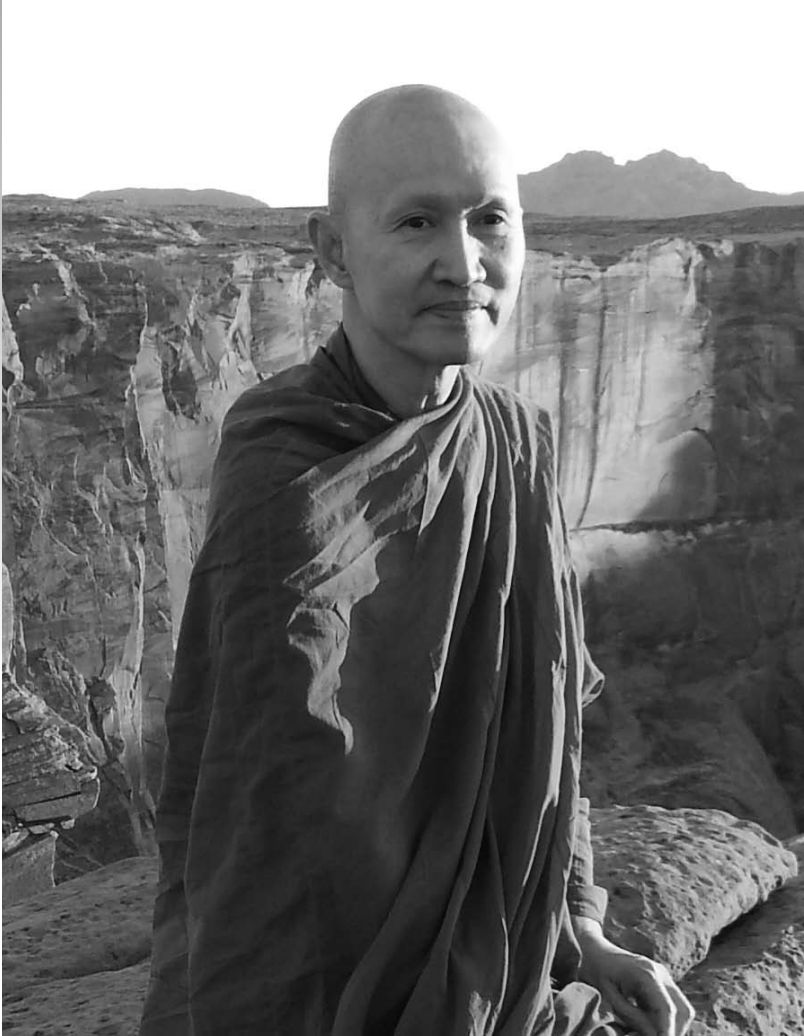
Today all of you have made an intention to come here to the monastery. Some of you have been here since this morning when you came to offer dāna (food and requisites) to the monks, while some of you have come here later on this evening

with a wish to observe the moral precepts and practice meditation. In doing so you are gradually strengthening the spiritual perfections within your hearts. This is what it means to have right view within one's heart. And if we can maintain this right view and continue to practice accordingly for the rest of our life, then when we die, we will surely take rebirth in either the human, the devatā, or the Brahma²⁶ realm. By maintaining right view within our heart, we will continue to create the causes and conditions that will bring about a lessening in the number of future lives until ultimately realizing Nibbana.

So for tonight I offer just this much for you to reflect upon. May I end this talk here.



²⁶ See Footnote 1, p.2.



A Short Biography of Venerable Ajahn Dtun



Venerable Ajahn Dtun (Thiracitto) was born in the province of Ayutthaya, Thailand, in 1955. At the age of six his family moved to Bangkok and he remained living there until June 1978.

From a young age he was a boy whose heart naturally inclined toward having a foundation in moral discipline. By the time he was a teenager and during his university years there would be many small incidents that would fashion his life and gradually steer him away from the ways of the world towards wishing to live the Holy Life.

After graduating in March 1978 with a Bachelors degree in Economics, he was accepted into a Masters degree in Town Planning at the University of Colorado, USA. However, while preparing to travel abroad many small insights

amalgamated in force and changed his way of thinking from planning to take his studies as far as he could and to then lead a family life, to deciding that after graduation he would remain single and work to financially assist his father until the time was right for him to ordain as a monk. One evening he picked up a Dhamma book belonging to his father which opened, by chance, at the last words of the Buddha: “Now monks, I declare to you: Decline and disappearance is the nature of all conditions. Strive on with diligence!” Reading over this a second and then a third time the words resonated deeply within his heart causing him to feel that the time had come to now ordain, knowing this was the only thing that would bring him any true benefit. He resolved that within two months he would ordain as a monk and that his ordination would be for life.

In June 1978, he travelled to the north eastern province of Ubon Ratchathani to ordain with the Venerable Ajahn Chah at Wat Nong Pah Pong. Resolute by nature and determined in his practice he was to meet with steady progress regardless of whether he was living with Ajahn Chah or at any of Wat Nong Pah Pong’s branch monasteries. In 1981, he returned to central Thailand to spend the Rains Retreat at Wat Fah Krahm (near Bangkok) together with Venerable Ajahn Piak and Venerable

Ajahn Anan. The three remained at Wat Fah Krahm until late 1984, when Venerable Ajahn Anan and Venerable Ajahn Dtun were invited to take up residence on a small piece of forest in the province of Rayong in Eastern Thailand. Seeing that this land was unsuitable for long term residence, Ajahn Dtun chose another piece of land that was made available to them, a forested mountain that would later become the present day Wat Marp Jan.

He spent five years assisting Venerable Ajahn Anan to establish Wat Marp Jan, and then decided it was time to seek solitude so as to intensify his practice, knowing this to be necessary if he was to finally bring the practice of Dhamma to its completion. He was invited to practice on 80-acres of dense forest in the province of Chonburi where he remained in comparative isolation for two years. In 1992 he accepted the offer of land for the establishment of a monastery, which he named Wat Boonyawad. Presently, the monastery covers 160 acres, all kindly given by the faith and generosity of Mr and Mrs. Boon and Seeam Jenjirawatana and family.

The Venerable Ajahn, since 1993, has a growing reputation as a prominent teacher within the Thai Forest Tradition, and has attracted between 50-60 monks to come and live, and practice, under his guidance at Wat Boonyawad.



Wat Buddha Dhamma
Ten Mile Hollow
Wisemans Ferry NSW 2775
+61 2 4323 3193
www.wbd.org.au